

The Copernican Shift

By Max Lucado

Blame it on Copernicus. The world was rocking along pretty well until he came along in 1543 and announced that the sun, and not the earth was the center of the solar system. Ptolemy had convinced the world otherwise and for 1,400 years we believed we were the center of activity. It was an enviable position. Fathers could point to the night sky, put their arms around the shoulder of their child and proclaim, "We are right in the middle of it all."

The hub of the planetary wheel, the navel of the heavenly body, the 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue of the universe. Let the other planets orbit restlessly like vagabonds through the skies, not us. No sir. We were here yesterday; we'll be here tomorrow. As predictable as Christmas.

Not only were we in the middle of it all, we were the anchor of it all. Ptolemy envisioned a motionless earth. A rock of stability amidst schizo-phrenic orbs. Why, some planets are so moody they'll do a 180-degree turn on you from one day to the next. Not the earth. Nope. The rock of Gibraltar doesn't budge and the earth doesn't turn. We are the center of the universe and we are the anchor of the universe.

Then comes Nicolaus. Nicolaus Copernicus with his maps and drawings and bony nose and Polish accent. He taps us on our collective shoulders, clears his throat and says, "Excuse me, I'm very sorry to be one to break the news. But the center of our solar system is out there." And lifting a lone finger he pointed toward the brightest star: the sun.

The announcement was not well received. People didn't receive demotions well back then. We still don't. We still like to think the universe revolves around us. And we don't like to be told otherwise. But isn't this the message of the Bible? Doesn't God do what Copernicus did? Tapping the collective shoulder of humanity he points to the Son and says, "Behold the center of it all."

"God raised him (Christ) from death and set him on a throne in deep heaven, in charge of running the universe, everything from galaxies to governments, no name and not power exempt from his rule. And not just for the time being, but forever. He is in charge of it all, has the final word on everything. At the center of all this, Christ rules the church." (Eph. 1:20,21 MSG)

On one hand, this news brings great relief. Since you are no longer the center of the universe, you no longer feel the weight of the world on your shoulders. But on the other hand, the transition from self-centered to Christ-centered is the toughest challenge we ever face. There is a bit of Ptolemy all of us.

If Christ is the center, everything changes. No longer do you live to serve you; you live to serve Him. You strive not to fulfill your will, but His. No longer do you demand your way, but you seek His way. Your aim is not your pleasure, but his honor. You are no longer the master of your domain; God is. Your first question is not, "What do I want to do today?" But, rather, "What is God doing and how can I be a part it?"

It's not about you and me. It's about Him.

Talk about a Copernican shift! Yet talk about a necessary shift.

Think about the consequences of flat-earth thinking. Don't you think Ptolemy had some tough questions? Not the least of which were changing seasons and star patterns. If you view the earth as an unmoving saucer when it's actually a rotating orb, you've got some natural science issues.

And, if you view yourself as the center of the universe, when you're not, you've got some philosophical issues. Namely, the three "d's": death, disease and disaster. How could calamity befall the MVP's of existence? If the world revolves around you, why doesn't everything go the way you want it to?

To become a Christian is to admit that it doesn't. To become a Christian means to confess and celebrate God as the star and assume our place as loved, yet, lesser orbs in his plan.

The result is Masterful.

We hear less of, "Here is what I want!" and more of "What do you suppose God wants?"

Career and business become platforms for God's name, not ours. And our bodies. No longer do we say, "Well, it's my body I can (multiple choice) eat what I want, inhale what I want, sleep with whomever I want." But rather we realize our bodies are on loan from God. How can we use them to honor Him?

Call it a Copernican shift. From self-centered to God-centered. From self-promotion to God-promotion. The change wasn't easy for Copernicus. Even the church gave him grief over his discovery.

The change isn't easy for you and me. But it's worth it to discover your place in the universe.